

Understanding Revelation – Topic 11

The saints are sealed

**A shelter
in the time of storm**

An exposition of Revelation Chapter 7

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Introduction

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Revelation 7:1

This passage does not mean that the prophet is seeing events that transpired after those portrayed in Revelation 6, rather, after the vision of chapter 6 he sees another portrayal of God's people in the End Time.

Four angels at the four corners of the earth

...I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth...

The number *four* always denotes universality in Scripture, telling us that the events predicted are to be worldwide. The *four corners of the earth* is an Old Testament term which is better translated the *four quarters of the earth*.¹ Therefore the expression *four angels* means that worldwide angelic influences are keeping in check the forces of destruction.

Scripture reveals that Heaven has delegated authority to the angels over the various elements of the natural world. Scripture speaks of an angel having *power over fire* (Revelation 15:8) and refers to *the angel of the waters* (Revelation 16:5).

*Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished.*²

Four winds

Winds in Scripture represent war, strife and commotion, especially at the close of human probation. This is when the judgments of God fall upon the rejecters of the truth of God during the seven last plagues.

... the four winds of the earth...

Typically of the book of Revelation, this picture is borrowed from the Old Testament. The prophet Jeremiah, while predicting the destruction of Elam (Persia) declared:

"A noise will come to the ends of the earth – for the Lord has a controversy with the nations; He will plead His case with all flesh. He will give those who are wicked to the sword," says the Lord." Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. And at that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground." Jeremiah 25:31-33

¹ See Isaiah 11:12. Note: the Hebrew word for *corners* may be translated *extremities, quarters or wings*.

² Ellen G. White, "Letter 79, 1900," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).7:967.

These four winds represent what are in effect worldwide forces of destruction.

The release of the winds of strife by angelic powers undoubtedly will produce *the great whirlwind* of destruction predicted to occur in *The Day of the Lord*. Zephaniah 1:14-18; 2:1-3; Jeremiah 25:31-33.

The sealing message

Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." Revelation 7:2-3

...Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees...

Some commentators attempt to interpret the *earth*, the *sea* and the *trees* in this passage as having symbolic meaning. However these terms do not need to be seen as symbolic, rather, in this passage, they apply literally to elements of the surface of the planet. When the seven last plagues fall they will seriously affect each of these areas of the planet's environment. The second plague impacts upon the oceans and the seas. The third plague affects all the water of the dying planet, and the fourth plague, one of fierce heat, will surely involve the destruction of the remaining forests of the world as well as all existing vegetation.

...till we have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads".

However we should ask why the four angelic powers commissioned by heaven are told to hold back the winds of judgment until God's servants have been sealed.

How is the sealing message delivered?

...another angel ascending from the east...

This denotes both the manner in which the sealing message will be delivered and its origin.

An angel in prophecy often represents a message or a movement of God, that is, a group of believers entrusted with a special message for the world.

The East is the area of the compass from which any object is first seen when approaching our world from outer space. It is the designated point of the compass from which heavenly powers approach the earth.³ It is a declaration that the angel (or message) is from heaven – that it is God-inspired.

Just as the early rays of the sun, low in the east, are soft and gentle, so the sealing message, when it first arose was weak and insignificant. However like the rising of the sun, it gains power and strength over time until it reaches its zenith. Its high point represents the final proclamation of the gospel, identified as *the loud cry* (Revelation 18:1-4).

³ Ezekiel 46:1-2; Matthew 24:27; Revelation 16:12

Content of the sealing message

What is the content of the sealing message? The answer is found once we discover what constitutes the seal of God. Scripture reveals that there are three key seals which *the servants of God* (or believers in Christ) must receive – the Seal of the Holy Spirit, the Seal of the Law (or Sabbath) and the Seal of Redemption.

The seal of the Holy Spirit

The Seal of the Holy Spirit was initially associated with Christ and is alluded to in the gospel of John.

...God the Father has set His seal on Him. John 6:27

This sealing refers to Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism. It was prefigured in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Before the Israelites could present their sacrificial offerings, their animals had to be brought to the priest for inspection. If the priest was satisfied that the offering was free from blemish, he would then take *the temple seal* and mark the animal, to indicate that it was acceptable for sacrifice.

So it was with the Lord Jesus. Immediately after His baptism, when John the Baptist publicly announced Him as *The Lamb of God*, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the bodily form of a dove when God's voice declared from heaven

...You are My beloved Son: in You I am well pleased. Luke 3:22

Jesus was now marked – sealed - by the Holy Spirit. This sealing was an assurance to Him that He was accepted, that He had been obedient to God, and that He was the Messiah. It must have been a wonderful encouragement to Him as He commenced His difficult ministry.

Not only does Scripture declare that Jesus was sealed with the Spirit, it also indicates that the believer in Jesus is likewise sealed with the Spirit.

*.... in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise
Ephesians 1:13*

This sealing occurs simultaneously with our conversion to Christ. The literal Greek renders it:

In Him.... when you believed - you were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit.⁴

The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit as soon as he believes in and accepts the Lord Jesus.

*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a deposit.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22*

This means that when we receive the seal of the Spirit there is placed in our hearts or minds an earnest pledge or guarantee of salvation – the assurance of forgiveness and acceptance.

We also have the assurance that we belong to God.

⁴ Holman Christian Standard Bible. See also Twentieth Century New Testament.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity". 2 Timothy 2:19

When we receive the seal of the Spirit we are given an assurance that we belong to God, that we are His sons and daughters, members of God's family.

This seal is also a guarantee of inheritance. The seal of the Spirit assures us that one day we will inherit the kingdom.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

The faithful receive their inheritance at the Second Advent, in the earth made new.

Through the centuries millions of Christians, without any outward evidence, have accepted God's promise of an eternal inheritance. How can this be best explained? The Holy Spirit is not the seal; rather He is the sealer, creating an assurance within the believer at the time of his conversion. As one author has declared:

Those who believed in Christ (referring to Pentecost) were sealed by the Holy Spirit.⁵

The Holy Spirit was given to them (the Apostles) in its fullness, sealing them for their work.⁶

Every true Christian through the ages has received the Seal of the Holy Spirit.

The seal of the Law (or seal of the Sabbath)

The Seal of the Law (or Seal of the Sabbath) comes into prominence during the End-Time of world history.

Seal the law among my disciples. Isaiah 8:16

While this chapter of Isaiah had its initial application to Isaiah's day, it also has a latter day application. Every law, to be valid, must have a seal. Therefore God's law must also have a seal. Consequently, amongst God's people in the latter days, God's law is to be sealed. This seal must consist of three elements: the name of the person or the authority, the title of this authority, and the territory or dominion over which the authority is held.

These three elements of the Seal of the Law are found in only one commandment of God's Law. That commandment is the fourth commandment, the commandment regarding the Sabbath. In this command we have God's name - *the Lord thy God*, His title - *He who made heaven and earth* or *Creator*, and thirdly, we have the territory of dominion over which God rules - *heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them*. (Exodus 20:8-11)

These three elements, which comprise the seal, are found only in the fourth commandment. Other Scriptures also clearly declare that the Sabbath is the sign, the seal, between God and His people.

⁵ Ellen G. White, "Ms 85, 1903," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).6:1055.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911).30.

Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Exodus 31:16

Who constitutes Israel in the End Time? In the New Testament the term *Israel* is applied to the true believers within the Christian church.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed (or Israelites)... Galatians 3:29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; ... in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. Romans 2:28-29

An Israelite, therefore, is one who belongs to Christ. This means that Christians, as spiritual Israelites, are called to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath becomes the sign, or seal, between the Christian and his God.

How then does the weekly Sabbath constitute a sign, or seal, for the Christian?

First of all the Sabbath is a sign that God created all things.

It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed. Exodus 31:17

Next the Sabbath informs us of humanity's origin. It takes us back to Genesis Chapter 1 where we are informed that *God created man in His own image*. Adam was created a *son of God* (Luke 3:38). Therefore our race has a noble and holy origin: we are descended from a son of God.

The Seal of the Sabbath also assures us that God intends to restore in us the image of God which has been lost.

Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. Ezekiel 20:12

To sanctify means *to make holy*, to effect a change in an individual's character. It means the restoration of the image of God in that person. True Sabbath-keeping is a signature feature of this promise.

The believer receives the Seal of the Law by his observance of the true Sabbath.

Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God. Ezekiel 20:20

To hallow something means to treat it as sacred: therefore to be a recipient of the seal results in that person's veneration of the Sabbath as sacred. As stated in the SDA Bible Commentary:

Those who would have the seal of God in their foreheads must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.⁷

The Christian is not only to believe in the Sabbath, but also to keep it. Therefore the prediction of Revelation Chapter 7 reveals that in the End Time, prior to the Day of the Lord and the judgments of God upon the earth, a divine message is to be proclaimed to

⁷ Ellen G. White, "Ms 27, 1899," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957). 7:98.

the world calling God's servants back to the original rest day as decreed in the fourth commandment.

Do we see such a call being sounded today? The Seventh-day Adventist movement holds that this section of Scripture provides biblical authority for proclaiming the Sabbath message to the world. Commencing in 1844 and continuing to this day, this message is now being proclaimed around the globe.

The observance of all God's commandments - including the true Sabbath - is essential for readiness for Christ's return.

The seal of redemption

According to Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy there are two applications for the sealing of Revelation Chapter 7. The first application is to the Seal of the Law (the Sabbath) described above – the message which is to go to *every nation, kindred, tongue and people*. The second application is to a third seal – the Seal of Redemption – which is to be placed upon the foreheads of the saints prior to the close of probation.

The seal (or *mark*) of redemption is described comprehensively in the Spirit of Prophecy. It is based on a prophecy recorded in Ezekiel Chapter 9. While this prophecy had its initial local and literal application to Israel in Old Testament times, it now has a spiritual, worldwide application to our times, to spiritual Israel, the true church.

Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand." And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it."

To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the temple. Ezekiel 9:1-6

The above passage describes an incredible scene. It portrays the marking of God's people in the city of Jerusalem – which spiritually represents the sealing of the church of God in the last days. Those who do not receive the mark of protection receive instead the judgments of God. This mark is referred to as *the mark of redemption*, a seal of protection in the form of the Hebrew letter *Tau*, the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

By demarcating them in this way the angel marked them as the last of the righteous.⁸

Here we have a marking of the remnant of the woman's seed which constitutes the righteous remnant.

Notice particularly the setting which portrays the investigative judgment, the Day of Atonement. The one who does the marking is clothed with linen, similar to the garments the High Priest wears on the Day of Atonement. He has a writer's inkhorn by his side. This suggests that decisions are being made and he is making a record of the findings. It also suggests that there is a marking or sealing during the Day of Atonement.

Relationship to the Day of Atonement in ancient Israel

In the days of ancient Israel a sealing took place on the Day of Atonement. As Dr F. C. Gilbert, the Jewish Christian scholar has recorded:

As the day (of atonement) draws to its close, the earnestness and intensity increase. It is generally believed that the close of this day is recorded in heaven as a sealing time. If the people have done sufficient repenting they will receive a good seal, which means they have stood the test in heaven. If not, then they fear they are lost and may die at any time. Hence in their closing prayers of the day, instead of saying 'Our Father our King, write our name in the Book of Remembrance' etc, they say, 'Our Father, Our King, seal our name in the Book of Life... seal our name in the Book of Remembrance.' When the service is ended they greet each other with the salutation 'I hope you have received a good seal'.⁹

As there was a sealing on the typical Day of Atonement, so likewise in the great anti-typical Day of Atonement, in which we now stand. At its close there will also be a sealing of the saints. Both Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 7 refer to this sealing.

This sealing of the servants of God, is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision.¹⁰

Thus, while Revelation Chapter 7 applies primarily to the Seal of the Law, there is also an application to the *Seal of Redemption*, the same seal or mark referred to in Ezekiel Chapter 9.

Purpose of the Seal of Redemption

In the book of Revelation two different pictures are presented of the sealing work. The first is seen in Revelation Chapter 7: the second in Revelation Chapter 14, verses 1-5. Here the 144,000 are not specifically described as being sealed, rather as *having His* (the Lamb's) *Father's name written in their foreheads*. However because the name of God represents the character of God, this is the same sealing as depicted in Revelation Chapter 7.

⁸ William H. Shea, "The Investigative Judgment of Judah: Ezekiel 1-10," in *Studies in Sanctuary and Atonement*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of SDAs, 1980). 287.

⁹ Fred C. Gilbert, *Practical Lessons from the Experience of Israel* (South Lancaster MA: South Lancaster Printing Co, 1926). 536-537.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 3rd ed. (Boise, ID.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1962).445

Why are there two different pictures of the sealing?

Firstly, because Revelation Chapter 14 reveals the character of those who are sealed and, when one reads the beautiful description of the 144,000 here, one realizes that they have reached completion of character.

...they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:5

Secondly, Revelation Chapter 7 gives the reason for the sealing. Its purpose is to protect the saints during the time of trouble. This seal is a seal of protection. The angels are commanded to hold the four winds - the judgments of God - until the saints are sealed. Why must this occur? Because when the winds are released and the judgments of God are meted out, only the sealed will receive divine protection.

Ezekiel 9:6 makes clear that this mark, this seal, provides protection.

Utterly slay old and young... but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark...

Following on from Revelation 6:14 the terrifying events of the sixth seal are portrayed. The heavens depart as a scroll and the unsaved behold in the distance the coming Christ. They rush to the rocks and mountains, and the question is forced from their lips

For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? Revelation 6:17

The answer is given in the next chapter – Revelation Chapter 7. The ones who will stand in the day of His wrath are those who are sealed in their foreheads with the seal of the living God. The purpose of the Seal of Redemption, then, is to protect the saints.

Elements of the Seal of Redemption

Firstly, as with the second seal, the protective Seal of Redemption also requires three elements. However these three elements are quite different from the three elements required by the Seal of the Law. Consequently the Seal of Redemption is quite different from the Seal of the Law.

The elements of the Seal of Redemption are found in Revelation Chapter 3.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. Revelation 3:12

The Spirit of Prophecy confirms that the three elements found in this verse apply to the third seal or *the mark of redemption*.

*On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus name.*¹¹

What is the significance of the three elements that comprise this seal? These elements denote ownership, destiny and character. First of all the name of God is placed upon His people. Therefore they belong to God the Father. Secondly, the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, is placed upon them. This indicates their destiny, which is citizenship in the New Jerusalem. Thirdly, Christ's new name is in the seal, indicating that the bearer has the character of Christ.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*(Washington, DC.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1882). 15.

In describing the saints during the final scenes of the last great conflict we read,

*The indelible mark of God is upon them. God can plead that His own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed "God, New Jerusalem." They are God's property, His possession.*¹²

Timing of the Seal of Redemption

It is quite clear from Scripture and the Spirit of prophecy when the Seal of Redemption is received. God gives this seal to protect His people at the Close of Probation. Nowhere does the Spirit of Prophecy state that the final seal will be affixed at the Latter Rain before the Loud Cry, as some have proposed.¹³

*Before the work is closed up and the sealing of God's people is finished, we shall receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God.*¹⁴

Because of confusion between the Seal of the Law (the Sabbath) and the final Seal of Redemption, it appears that a statement in Great Controversy has been misunderstood. In the chapter entitled *The Final Warning*, which outlines the events of *the Loud Cry*, we find the statement

*The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty; for it is the point of truth especially controverted...when one class... receives the Mark of the Beast, the other... receives the Seal of God.*¹⁵

This *Seal of God* referred to in this instance is the Seal of the Law - the Sabbath - and while individuals continue to accept the truth of the Sabbath, they will receive this seal. This will continue until the close of Probation when the last of God's people come out of Babylon. However, the Seal of the Law, while it is the sign of our sanctification and loyalty, and is closely associated with the Seal of Redemption, is quite distinct from it.

The Seal of Redemption is placed upon God's people after the formation of the image to the beast.

*The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God.... This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed.*¹⁶

What is this image of the beast? When the united Protestant churches ally themselves with the state and issue religious laws - particularly Sunday laws - then the image of the beast will have been formed. Because the image of the beast and the Sunday law come into existence in reaction to the Loud Cry of the Third Angel's Message,¹⁷ the final seal of God - the Seal of Redemption - cannot be affixed to the saints until after the Latter Rain.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*. 444-445.

¹³ Erwin R. Gane, *Enlightened by the Spirit: Friend, Teacher, and Guide*(Mountain View CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 1995).109-127. This view was apparently introduced by an SDA offshoot group called *The Shepherd's Rod*. Some seek authority for this error by quoting 9T 97. However this statement makes no reference at all to probation closing for the saints. It refers to *those who would not enter*, ie, those who reject the truth, not to those who are faithful to the truth.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*(Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc, 1958).1:111.

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*(Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1898).605.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, "Letter 11, 1890," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol(Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).7:976.

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*.607-609.

The four angels had power from God to hold the four winds, and they were about to let them go; but while their hands were loosening, and the four winds were about to blow, the merciful eye of Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not sealed, and He raised His hands to the Father and pleaded with Him that He had spilled His blood for them. Then another angel was commissioned to fly swiftly to the four angels and bid them hold, until the servants of God were sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads.¹⁸

When the third angel's message was closing, the power of God had rested upon His people. They had received the latter rain, or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the living testimony had been revived. The last great warning had sounded everywhere, and it had stirred up and enraged the inhabitants of the earth. I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer's inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus throw down the censer and say, "It is done". The angelic host made the solemn declaration, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still...."¹⁹

It is when the third angel's message is closing that the final seal is given. The angel with the writer's inkhorn returns to heaven because his work of sealing is completed and the announcement is then made of probation's close.

Just before we entered it (the time of trouble), we all received the seal of the living God. Then I saw the four angels cease to hold the four winds.²⁰

Notice that all receive the seal just before the Time of Trouble. The time of trouble here refers to the seven last plagues which commence at the close of probation.

The living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation.²¹

When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people.²²

These statements, along with many others in the Spirit of Prophecy, clearly show that the final Seal of Redemption and protection is applied just before the close of probation. In fact it appears that once the death decree is issued, the seal is then affixed.

When the decree goes forth, and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.²³

What stamp is impressed? It is the stamp of the seal. And what is the decree that goes forth? It appears to be the death decree.²⁴

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*.38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*.279.

²⁰ Ellen G. White, "Day-Star, March 14, 1886," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol(Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).7:968

²¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*.1:66.

²² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*(Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948).5:213.

²³ *Ibid.* 5:216.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 5:213.

While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God.²⁵

In commenting on the marking of Ezekiel 9, and the period to which it applies, the Spirit of Prophecy declares

When Jesus is about to leave the mercy seat and put on the garments of vengeance...²⁶

This means then that the sealing prophesied in Ezekiel 9 is immediately before the close of probation. The claim that probation closes for Seventh-day Adventists before it does for the rest of the world is erroneous (see Appendix A).

An invisible seal

The Seal of Redemption is invisible to human eyes.

It is a mark which angels, but not human eyes, can read; for the destroying angel must see this mark of redemption.²⁷

This statement is reminiscent of a major event during the Passover in Egypt. When the destroying angel saw the blood over the doorway, he passed by, meaning the Israelite inhabitants were spared. When the angels pour out the vials of the seven last plagues, which constitute the wrath of God upon the last generation of earth, those who have the Seal of Redemption will be passed over and therefore protected during the time of trouble.

When we read about the Time of Trouble we can certainly see that the faithful will need divine protection.

They come from a far country, from the end of heaven - The LORD and His weapons of indignation to destroy the whole land. Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp. Every man's heart will melt. Isaiah 13:5-7

The day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Joel 1:15

The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it? Joel 2:11

The great day of the Lord is near... the mighty man shall cry out. Zephaniah 1:14

It is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, I will bring distress upon men... it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Zephaniah 1:15; 2:1-3

There shall be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.²⁸

Everything was in the utmost confusion. Strife, war and bloodshed, with famine and pestilence, raged everywhere.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid. 5:475-476.

²⁶ Ibid. 5:207-208.

²⁷ Ellen G. White, "Letter 126, 1898," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol(Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).4:1161.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.6:408.

Soon the dead and dying will be all around the faithful remnant. Only those who have the seal of the living God will be sheltered from the storm of wrath that will fall on the heads of those who have rejected the truth.³⁰

Thank God for the Seal of Redemption – a seal of protection that God offers his people!

A seal of character completion

This final seal is a seal of character. First of all it denotes permanency and stability of character. It is the sign that the characters of the saints are now fully mature.

...the people of God are sealed in their foreheads - it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved.³¹

How impressive a concept this is! When God's people receive this final seal, they will have developed a stability of character from which they cannot be shaken. They will have reached the stage where they will fully love righteousness, and fully hate iniquity. This could not be said of the majority of believers in the present day. There may be some sins that we do not commit, but at the same time we do not fully hate. By the time we receive this final seal we will have come to the place in our characters, in our minds, where we fully love righteousness and fully hate iniquity. On the other hand, the act of applying the Seal of Redemption to believers will also indicate that the unsaved have themselves reached a permanency of character confirmed in evil thoughts and activity(see Revelation 22:11).

God's people reflect the image of Christ partially at the present moment; however by the time the final seal is affixed they will reflect the image of Christ fully. They will retain the *image of Christ*. This seal then implies maturity of character. This is the significance of Revelation 14:1-5. The group that is sealed prior to the close of probation has in their foreheads the name of God.

... having his Father's name written in their foreheads. Revelation 14:5

In commenting on this scripture the Spirit of Prophecy says,

While Satan was urging his accusations and seeking to destroy this company, holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God. These are they that stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having His Father's name written in their foreheads.³²

The above statements are descriptions of the 144,000, the number representing the final group of God's people who will be translated. Verse 5 states that in their mouth there is no deceit. This is the character that God will finally produce in His saints, so that they will be fit for translation.

²⁹ Ibid. 1:268.

³⁰ James White, "Present Truth," *The Present Truth* 1, no. 1 (1849).31.

³¹ Ellen G. White, "Ms 173, 1902," in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F.D. Nichol(Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957).4:1161.

³² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*. 5:475-476.

*The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman, one ...of false tongue or deceitful heart. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God.*³³

Those who receive the final seal will be overcomers. God will have produced in them a mature character.

*Those who receive the Seal of God and are protected in the Time of Trouble must reflect the image of God fully*³⁴

A seal which indicates eternal security

This final seal indicates that we are now eternally secure.

*The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.... Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices...holy angels, unseen, were passing to and fro, placing upon them the seal of the living God.*³⁵

This means that our characters are fully stabilized, nevermore to be defiled: therefore we will have ceased to knowingly commit sin.

*As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.*³⁶

Sadly this beautiful truth engenders a negative attitude among many today, but it is the clear unequivocal teaching of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Some claim that they become discouraged by this knowledge; however this dismay is due solely to a lack of faith. The truth is that it tells us what God guarantees to do for us. It is what the final sealing involves and should be regarded as a promise. Our responsibility is to trust and obey, believing that God will accomplish what He promises.

*Those that overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be the favored ones who shall receive the seal of the living God. Those whose hands are not clean, whose hearts are not pure, will not have the seal of the living God. Those who are planning sin and acting it will be passed by. Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of those who are repenting and confessing their sins...will be recognized and marked as worthy of God's protection...those who are steadfastly looking and waiting and watching for the appearing of their Saviour...who have works corresponding to their avowed faith....*³⁷

This is an impressive standard, but it is also eminently reassuring. The assurances of God are clear and He will accomplish everything He promises.

It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
Philippians 2:13

³³ Ibid. 5:216.

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*.71.

³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.5:475-476.

³⁶ Ibid. 7:970.

⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*. 71.

³⁷ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*.445.

The seal is

*...upon those who bear a likeness to Christ in character... They must overcome pride, passion, spiritual slothfulness, and make a determined effort for symmetry of character.*³⁸

Here is heaven's answer to those who proclaim that we are unable to keep the commandments of God and that we will be sinning until the Second Advent. The truth is the opposite. We are to gain

*... victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.*³⁹

*Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth, these are receiving the heavenly mold, and preparing for the seal of God.*⁴⁰

A seal for those who sigh and cry

The prophet Ezekiel in his portrayal of the final sealing declared

...put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it. Ezekiel 9:4

The Spirit of Prophecy expands on this verse:

The prophet, looking down the ages, had this time presented before his vision...those who have had the greatest light and privileges have become contaminated by the prevailing iniquity.... Love for the divine precepts increases with one class according as contempt for them increases with another class.... the time of God's visitation has about come... Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily.

Those who walk in the light ... are not to sit in quiet unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves that God will shelter his people in the day of visitation... They should realize that it is their duty to labour diligently to save others...

...At the time when danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company... will be sighing and crying for the abominations...

These had been holding forth the words of life; they had reproved, counseled and entreated...

In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished... by their soul anguish...expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those... will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any. Their righteous souls are vexed ... with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They... see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had

³⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.5:216.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

great light. They lament... because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church.⁴¹

But more especially will their prayers arise on behalf of the church, because its members are doing after the manner of the world. The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain... some repented and humbled their hearts...but the glory... had departed from Israel... his presence and power were lacking....

The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God....

Those ... who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that the Lord ... is too merciful to visit his people in judgment... Thus "Peace and safety" is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions... These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God...

The abominations for which the faithful ones were sighing and crying were all that could be discerned by finite eyes, but by far the worst sins...were unrevealed... These persons came to feel secure in their deceptions... But He will... open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.

...Those who have been regarded as worthy and righteous prove to be ring-leaders in apostasy and examples in indifference...

It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those...who have felt the power of the word in ministering to others. They were once His faithful servants...but they departed from Him and led others into error, and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure.

...The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land (emphasis ours).⁴²

The people of God are sighing and crying for the abominations done in the land ... the anguish and humiliation of God's people is unmistakable evidence that they are regaining the strength and nobility of character lost in consequence of sin.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid.474-5

⁴² Ibid.208-12

⁴³ Ibid.474-5

The three seals of the saints – a summary

Jesus Christ	Believer	Sabbath keeper	Final remnant
1. The Seal of the Holy Spirit		2. The Seal of the Law	3. The Seal of Redemption
At baptism	At conversion	By true Sabbath observance	At close of probation
An inward sign of God's acceptance		An outward sign of creation & sanctification	An invisible sign of victory & deliverance
An assurance of: Ownership - that He belonged to God Messiahship - that He was God's anointed	An assurance of: Salvation God's forgiveness Ownership - a child of God Inheritance - will enter the kingdom of God	An assurance of: One's origin - created in God's image One's restoration - restored to God's image	An assurance of: Protection - from 7 last plagues Ownership - has God's name Destiny - New Jerusalem Fitness - Christ's name = maturity & stability of character

The 144,000

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: Revelation 7:4

As already discussed above, the term *Israel* in the New Testament applies to spiritual Israel, to born again Christians.

The number *144,000* depicts the final product of the sealing message, those - who in answer to the despairing cry of the unsaved in Revelation 6:17 - will be able to stand when Christ appears in power and glory at the Second Advent.

In Revelation 7:5-8 are listed the names of the twelve tribes from which twelve thousand each are sealed, making a total of 144,000. These numbers, however, we suggest, are to be understood in a symbolic sense.⁴⁴

The number 144,000 is a multiple of twelve and in Scripture twelve is associated with church government. In fact there were thirteen tribes of Israel, but it is always stated that there were twelve tribes. This further indicates that we need to take care in determining the 144,000 as a literal number.

⁴⁴ **Note:** the Book of Revelation is a book of symbols and is based on the Old Testament. To understand it correctly we must check with the Old Testament to ascertain the source of the imagery employed. The Old Testament method of numbering was by heads of families. If the 144,000 is interpreted by this principle, then the number is in fact many more than the literal figure.

The tribes are not always listed in a consistent order in the Old Testament. Approximately eighteen different orders are given for the list of tribes. Revelation Chapter 7 differs from most of the Old Testament listings in that first, the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are missing. This omission is because these two tribes were involved in apostasy and have been replaced by Joseph and Levi. Second, however, the order of the names is different in any case.

Why is this particular order used for the twelve tribes in Revelation? It has been discovered that when the Hebrew meaning of the name for each tribe is translated, a significant description of the character of the 144,000 is presented. The following table shows the order given in Revelation 7:5-8 with the interpretation for each name.

The twelve tribes of Revelation Chapter 7	
Tribes of Revelation Ch 7	Interpretation of name
Judah	Praise God,
Reuben	A Son,
Gad	A company of sons, redeemed and
Asher	<u>Happy</u> , after
Naphtali	<u>Wrestling</u> with God in prayer,
Manasseh	<u>Forgetting</u> self and the past,
Simeon	<u>Hearing</u> God's Word and
Levi	<u>Joined</u> to God, as
Issachar	Servants
Zebulon	Dwelling with
Joseph	<u>Added</u> joys and blessings, as
Benjamin	Sons of the right hand of God

The great multitude

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9-10

The Revelator is now directed away from the sealed group of the End Time, to the *great multitude* of redeemed saints before the throne in the kingdom of God. What a thrilling picture this is! The number of the redeemed is beyond human estimation in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ declared:

Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Matthew 7: 13-14

From the six thousand years of human history and the deadly reign of sin, a throng of people in number beyond human computation will finally be saved through the gospel of Christ. What a testimony to the power of the gospel and the mercy of God this is! (Note: Appendix B deals with an errant view of who constitutes the great multitude).

The terminology of v 9-10 indicates that this marvelous scene is the antitype, the fulfillment of the celebrated Feast of Tabernacles of Old Testament times. This feast was the final gathering of Israel for the ceremonial year, celebrated when the last harvest of the land had been gathered in. It lasted for eight joyful days during which the Israelites dwelt in temporary shelters to remind them of the wilderness wanderings of their forebears. All this was symbolic of the final ingathering of God's people into the heavenly kingdom.

The following table gives a comparison between type and antitype.

Type meets antitype - the Feast of Tabernacles	
Type	Antitype
The final festival for the ceremonial year in Israel	Finally, the great gathering of God's people in the kingdom of heaven.
Celebrated after Israel had reaped the main and final harvest of the land.	Celebrated after the great final harvest of spiritual Israel is reaped at the Second Advent.
Israel camped in temporary booths in old Jerusalem for the feast.	The saints will dwell in "the camp of the saints" in New Jerusalem [Revelation 20:9] However their permanent abode will be in the renewed earth.
Israel kept the feast for seven days amid great rejoicing.	Seven denotes continuity in Scripture, and speaks of the continual joy of the saints in the kingdom.
The feast concluded on the eighth day.	Eight in scripture frequently denoted regeneration or resurrection. The final harvest of the saints involves the resurrection.
The feast was to remind Israel of their wilderness wanderings.	In Heaven the saints also will remember their earthly sojourn in the wilderness of sin.
Palm branches which were frequently used during their wilderness experience were carried.	The saints in heaven will ... "have palms in their hands" reminding them that they were "strangers and pilgrims on earth."
Israel did no servile work during the feast - they rested.	In heaven the saints will cease from their labours and enter into their eternal rest.
Only those who were born Israelites could celebrate the feast.	Only those who are 'born again' as spiritual Israelites will celebrate the heavenly feast.

The theme song of the redeemed

...Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. Revelation 7:10

All glory for the marvelous salvation of the saints will be given to the Godhead. Originally the Trinity had covenanted together for the salvation of the race. The Son himself volunteered to be a substitute for guilty man. The Father and the Holy Spirit sent Him to this earth to be incarnated as a man.⁴⁵ He was truly

...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Revelation 13:8

For six thousand years the Godhead had endured the baleful presence of sin with its heart-rending consequences. The Father had suffered with the Son. The result of their separation, as payment in atonement for the broken law, is beyond human comprehension. However it is now completed, the fallen race is restored and harmony reigns supreme as men and angels rejoice together around the throne.

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. Revelation 7:11

John then hears the resounding anthem of praise in worship of the Deity. It is sevenfold and commences and ends with a mighty *Amen*.

Saying, Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 7:12

What a moving and impressive event this must be when in perfect harmony millions of voices render wholehearted praise to their Maker.

A special group

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" Revelation 7:13.

At first glance one might conclude that the elder is referring to the great multitude of v9 because they alone are so described. However, although all the redeemed will be clothed in white, the verse implies that these particular white-robed people are a separate group. Since the only other group mentioned in Revelation Chapter 7 is the one represented by the number 144,000, we should investigate whether there is something distinctive about the white robes of this group.

White robes always represent righteous character - *the righteousness of the saints* (Revelation 19:8). However the group symbolized by the 144,000 will reach a level of character development in which they are described as *having the seal of God* (or *name of God*), as *having no guile* and as being *without fault* (Revelation 14:1-5). It appears that this group's character development will be in advance of all the other groups of God's people. This appears to be confirmed in subsequent verses of this chapter.

⁴⁵ Isaiah 48:16

Another point which suggests that the elder is not alluding to the great multitude is his question: *Whence came they?* Verse 9 has clearly stated where the great multitude has come from. So it is justifiable to conclude that the elder is referring to the other group referred to in the chapter - the 144,000. The details in verses 14-17 confirm this conclusion.

And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14.

It would not be correct to conclude that the great multitude have come out of *the great tribulation*, even though it is true that Jesus promised His followers

In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Few Christians have suffered great tribulation; however this special group has passed through such an experience. Consequently the only group that fits the picture is that of the 144,000. They sing a special song, implying a special experience (Revelation 14:4). They stand as a special group in the kingdom of God, described as

...those who have the victory over the beast, over his image, over his mark, and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Revelation 15:2

The great tribulation referred to is that of the End Time - ... *the final conflict*... and ...*the time of Jacob's trouble*.⁴⁶

They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. Revelation 7:16.

During the seven last plagues, the 144,000 are promised protection.⁴⁷ Nevertheless they will suffer some of the effects of the plagues. These effects will be famine and pestilence, causing hunger and thirst. (The sun will also cause serious discomfort for the unsaved.⁴⁸) The saints will also cry to God day and night for deliverance from their pursuers because of the death decree that has been issued against them.⁴⁹ This explains why this special group is promised a highly privileged position in the kingdom.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them, for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.... And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Revelation 7:15, 17

This promise corresponds to the promised privileges for the 144,000 given in Revelation 14. In this chapter they are also depicted as being in very close proximity to the throne and to the Lamb.

⁴⁶ Revelation 12:17; 13:15-17; 15:2; Daniel 12:1

⁴⁷ Psalm 91:1-16; Isaiah 33:14-17; Daniel 12:1

⁴⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.5:474-475.

⁴⁹ 2 Timothy 3:1, 12-13; Revelation 13:15; 16:5-7

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand.... They sang as it were a new song before the throne.... These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. Revelation 14:1, 3, 4

This special group serves God *day and night in His temple* (v15). In the renewed earth, when the New Jerusalem becomes the capital of God's kingdom on earth, the Revelator states

... I saw no temple in it (Jerusalem), for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. Revelation 21:22

This does not mean that there is no longer a great temple in God's kingdom, only that the temple is no longer situated in the holy city. It could also indicate that the function of the temple is changed. No longer is it the centre of the drama of how the Deity deals with the question of sin. Sin has now been eliminated from the universe. No doubt the temple in which the 144,000 serve God will now be employed for grander purposes.

How to prepare for the final sealing

In the light of the fearful conflict which we are now entering, what are the essentials in preparing for the final Seal of Redemption, protection and deliverance?

1. Preserve the faith in its purity

When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity, and kept themselves unspotted from the world.⁵⁰

What is *the faith* that we are to preserve in its purity? It is the Three Angel's messages of Revelation 14. These distinctive messages, and no others, prepare God's people for the sealing.

The third angel is binding, or sealing them, in bundles for the heavenly garner.⁵¹

This tells us of the vital need to fully believe and obey the three angel's messages.

Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads...they had the light...they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. However high any minister may have stood in the favor of God, if he neglects to follow out the light given him of God, if he refuses to be taught as a little child, he will go into darkness and satanic delusions and will lead others in the same path⁵²

God has shown me that at the very time that the signs of the times are being fulfilled around us, when we hear, as it were, the tread of the hosts of heaven fulfilling their mission, men of intelligence, men in responsible positions, will be

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.5:210.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*.89

⁵² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.5:213-214.

*putting rotten timbers into their character building - material which is consumable in the day of God... They will lose heaven and an eternity of bliss.*⁵³

This is a solemn and dire warning to all who know the truth for these last days.

2. Expect and welcome special trials

Trials are God's method of purifying us for the final seal.

*Those who of late have embraced the truth would have to know what it is to suffer for Christ's sake, that they would have trials to pass through that would be keen and cutting, in order that they may be purified and fitted through suffering to receive the seal of the living God, pass through the time of trouble, see the King in His beauty...*⁵⁴

*We will know the conflict of overcoming.*⁵⁵

3. Seek help from God NOW

*May God help His people now, for what can they then do in such a fearful conflict without His assistance? Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavour, and firm adherence to the right, the children of God were sealing their destiny.*⁵⁶

*We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness... He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness...As we look to Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.*⁵⁷

⁵³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*.446-7.

⁵⁴ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*. 67.

⁵⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.215.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 2:213.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 7:970.

Conclusion

Whether we believe in the truth of it or not, God will fulfill His plan for His remnant people. He will have a people holy and undefiled, ready for translation.

*A great work was to be accomplished to prepare a people to be sealed with the seal of the living God.*⁵⁸

*The great, grand work of bringing out a people, who will have Christ-like characters and who will be able to stand in the day of the Lord, is to be accomplished.*⁵⁹

*In a little while every one who is a child of God will have this seal placed upon him ... though united in church capacity, he is not saved until the seal of God is placed upon him.*⁶⁰

*Only those who receive the seal of God will pass through the gates of the Holy City.*⁶¹

Here then are the three seals that are essential for the believer to receive. Of these three, the Seal of the Spirit takes priority, for without conversion, without having the Holy Spirit in our lives, the ability to receive the final two seals is impossible.

The Seal of the Sabbath is next in importance. It is the outward sign that the believer is cooperating with God in the process of sanctification - of obedience to all the commandments of God. It is also the outward sign that God is preparing believers for the final Seal of Redemption, which is essential for every saint who passes through the seven last plagues and is to be translated.

The first seal is given by the Holy Spirit. The second seal is received through the believer's obedience, when he hallows the Sabbath. The third seal will be affixed by a special ministry wrought by the angels of God.

⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*.2:73.

⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*.6:129.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 7:96.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 7:970.

Appendices

Appendix A – An errant view regarding probation

An erroneous claim is being made by some that the probation of the SDA Church will close before that of the world; that those who proclaim the Loud Cry of Revelation 18 are sealed at the commencement of the Latter Rain and at that time their probation closes.

There is no scriptural or Spirit of Prophecy evidence for this view, consequently it derives from a misreading of the prophets' words.

This view of the close of probation for SDAs originated with *The Shepherd's Rod* offshoot. Unfortunately some individuals continue to advocate this error from within the ranks of the Remnant.⁶²

The Spirit of Prophecy plainly declares that the close of probation will come suddenly upon all when Jesus leaves the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

When Jesus ceases to plead for man, the cases of all are forever decided. This is the time of reckoning with his servants. To those who have neglected the preparation of purity and holiness, which fits them to be waiting ones to welcome their Lord, the sun sets in gloom and darkness, and rises not again. Probation closes; Christ's intercessions cease in heaven. This time finally comes suddenly upon all, and those who have neglected to purify their souls by obeying the truth are found sleeping⁶³

The Lord is proving and testing His people. Angels of God are watching the development of character and weighing moral worth. Probation is almost ended, and you are unready. Oh, that the word of warning might burn into your souls! Get ready! Get ready! Work while the day lasts, for the night cometh when no man can work. The mandate will go forth: He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. The destiny of all will be decided.⁶⁴

When Jesus rises up in the most holy place, and lays off His mediatorial garments, and clothes Himself with the garments of vengeance in place of the priestly attire, the work for sinners will be done. The period of time will then have come when the mandate will go forth: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still...and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

All will be tested before Jesus leaves His position in the most holy place. The probation of all closes when the pleading for sinners is ended and the garments of vengeance are put on.⁶⁵

⁶² A.P. Cooke, *Error in Adventist Robes*, (Sydney: Self published, 1980).

⁶³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*. 2:191.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 2:401.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 2:691.

Appendix B – An errant view regarding *the great multitude*

Some commentators have expressed the view that the 144,000 represents *the great multitude* of Revelation 7:9. This view was presented originally by Taylor G. Bunch in the 1940's. However while the 144,000 may be a symbolic number it does not equate to *the great multitude* for the following reasons.

If the final number of the redeemed living on the earth at the Second Advent amounts to such a vast host of people *that cannot be numbered*, then the biblical concept of *the remnant* is totally contradicted. It would effectively mean that the total population of the earth at the time of the Second Advent would be saved. This is because it is now possible to estimate the approximate population of the globe, so that the number is not beyond computation. However *the great multitude* is beyond human computation, for *no man could number them*. The great multitude is therefore made up of a vast number of minorities gathered from throughout the ages. Scripture is very certain that only a minority of the race at any period of human history will be saved in God's kingdom - this is especially true of the final generation of mankind.

Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life and there are few who find it. Matthew 7:14

Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32.

When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went to make war with the rest (or remnant) of her offspring. Revelation 12:17

It is instructive to notice the description of the redeemed when they finally reach the kingdom. In the following statement, the Spirit of Prophecy describes four different groups of the saved who stand before the throne of God.

Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Savior with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honoured the law of God when the Christian world declared it void. Then the millions of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the great multitude, which no man could number of all nations, and nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*. 665.

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